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A HISTORICAL STUDY OF IQBAL'S VIEWS ON SUFISM

MAZHERUDDIN SIDDIQI

In the sixth chapter of his book, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal maintains that the rise and growth of ascetic Sufism which gradually developed under the influence of a non-Islamic character a purely speculative side, constituted one of the many factors which compelled the jurists of Islam to make the structure of their system as rigorous as possible with the object of preserving the social integrity of Islam. The Sufis, on their part, also reacted strongly against the verbal quibbles of our early doctors of law. For example, Iqbal quotes the case of Sufyān al-Thawrī who was one of the acutest legal minds of his time, but was driven to ascetic Sufism by the dry-as-dust subtleties of conte mporary legists.[1]

Iqbal does not approve of the spirit of radical other-worldliness in Sufism and says that this spirit obscured man's vision of a very important aspect of Islam as a social polity.[2] He is also critical of the speculative side of Sufism, because it offered the prospect of unrestrained and undisciplined thinking in which it finally absorbed the best minds of Islam. "The Muslim State was thus left generally in the hands of intellectual mediocrities, and the unthinking masses of Islam, having no personalities of a higher calibre to guide them, found their security only in blindly following the schools."[3]

Iqbal, however, repudiates the view put forward by the orientalists, like Von Kremer, Dozy, Merx and Nicholson who trace the origin and development of Islamic mysticism to non-Islamic sources. "No idea," he says, "can seize a people's soul unless, in some sense, it is the people's own."[4] It is important at this point to discuss the origins of Islamic mysticism, for this has a bearing on its subsequent development and on the moral and political effect that it produced on the general life of the Muslim Community.

ORIGINS OF ISLAMIC MYSTICISM

It is not necessary to go outside the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* literature to look for the frame of mind which produced the ascetic

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movement in Islam culminating in the birth of Sufism. There are verses in the Qur'ān, which lend themselves to mystic interpretation, if they are not read in conjunction with other equally important verses. For example, the Qur'ān says, "And strike for them the parable of the life of the world as water which We send down from the sky, and vegetation of the earth mingleth with it and then becometh dry twigs that the winds scatter." (XVIII : 46). "Restrain thyself along with those who cry unto their Lord at morn and evening, seeking His countenance; and let not thine eyes overlook them, desiring the pomp of the life of the world; and obey not him whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance, who followeth his own lust and whose case hath been abandoned." (XVIII : 29). And again, "He is the First and the Last, and the Outward and the Inward; and He is the Knower of all things." (LVII : 3). People with more than an ordinary share of the devotional spirit who preferred contemplation to action could easily have put a construction on these verses suited to their own frame of mind. Even among the Companions of the Prophet there were people whose natural bent of mind inclined them more towards contemplation and introversion. But, as Professor Fazlur Rahman remarks, the emphasis of such Companions could not have constituted a "way of life," independent of the society-building ethos of the Community at large.[5]

However, there came a time when this devotional and contemplative attitude gained strength from the socio-political conditions that arose after the assassination of 'Alī. There were two extreme reactions to the political confusion and the declining moral standards that prevailed intermittently down to the period of the later 'Abbāsids. One was activist and the other based on world renunciation. The Khawārij represented the first type of reaction and ascetics, like Ḥasan Baṣrī represented the other. But while the activist reaction of the Khawārij failed in its object of overthrowing impious regimes, the ascetic movement continued to gain momentum because it advocated withdrawal from the political field in which the worldly power of the Umayyads and the 'Abbāsids was so firmly entrenched that it could not be easily replaced. The failure of the Khawārij and the bloodshed caused by the internecine warfare must have contributed in a large measure to incline men's minds towards asceticism. In proportion as the moral standards of the people associated with the political

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regimes declined, persons of a contemplative nature sought refuge in self-denial and self-renunciation as the only method by which they could preserve their dignity as individuals and their spirituality as men of religion.

It is at this stage that we find isolationist *Ḥadīth* coming into circulation, i.e. *Ḥadīth* which teaches the way of renunciation and withdrawal from public affairs. For example, the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim contains the following *Ḥadīth* which inculcates absolute passivity in the face of social evils and political confusion. "There shall be civil wars wherein a sitting person will be better than a standing one, and a standing person shall be better than one who walks and one who walks will be better than one who runs." Similarly *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* contains the following *Ḥadīth*: "Stick to your home and control your tongue; take what you recognize as good; and mind your own business and have nothing to do with the affairs of the public."[6]

The ascetic movement, however, was not an organised affair. It merely represented the reaction of certain individuals with a contemplative bent of mind to the socio-political conditions of the time. The ascetics did not call themselves Sufis. It was not till the time of al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 256/869) that the appellation of *Ṣūfī* was used, and the first person to whom this term was applied was Abū Hāshim of Kūfa (d. 162 A.H.).[7] Nor did the Muslim ascetics attempt any restatement of the metaphysical foundations of Islam. They merely wished to return to the simplicity of the early days of Islam and to be left undisturbed by political controversies in the pursuit of a life of religious devotion.

Sufism proper with a distinct ethos of its own began somewhat later. The distinguishing characteristics of the Sufis was their desire for union with God. The ascetics renounced the world for the sake of a better life in the Hereafter. The Sufis, on the other, sought union with God through renunciation. The ascetic was moved by the fear of God, the Sufi, by the thought of divine mercy and grace. Both these aspects are equally stressed by the Qur'ān, but Sufism is exclusively preoccupied with only one of these aspects.

Besides the political unrest of the time which contributed to the growth of Sufism, there were other factors from which the movement derived its strength. Iqbal himself has enumerated some of these factors. He says that the sceptical tendencies of

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Islamic Rationalism which found an early expression in the poems of Bashshār b. Burd, ultimately necessitated an appeal to a super-intellectual source of knowledge which asserted itself in *al-Risālah* of al-Qushayrī (986).[8] Another factor was the bitter theological controversy between the Ash'arites and the advocates of Rationalism "which tended not only to confine religion within the narrow limits of schools, but also stirred up the spirit to rise above all petty sectarian wrangling."[9] Iqbal also says that the presence of Christianity was a further contributory factor in the growth of Sufism. "It was, however, principally the actual life of the Christian hermit rather than his religious ideas, that exercised the greatest fascination over the minds of early Islamic saints whose complete unworldliness, though extremely charming in itself is, I believe, quite contrary to the spirit of Islam."[10]

Although Iqbal is justified in his assertion that the doctrines of Christianity did not influence the Sufi movement, it would not be out of place here to mention the fact that the Messianic doctrine of the *mahdī* came into Islam through the Sufis. "The beginnings of Sufism are clearly connected with early popular preachers—known by various names—who used Messianism in their sermons to satisfy the politically disillusioned and morally starved masses. In the beginning, the two doctrines—that of the reappearance of Jesus and that of the *mahdī*—are quite distinct, since their historical sources are quite different, but later the two figures are brought together, although not entirely successfully."[11]

Sufism further shared with Shī'ism certain common doctrinal elements. For example, the *Aqṭāb* (poles) of Sufism are characterised by the invisibility, the infallibility and the esoteric knowledge of the Shī'ī *imām* who, by this time, was declared to be absent (from public view). Similarly, the Sufis employ the method of *Ta'wīl* (mystical interpretation which differs from the commonly accepted interpretation of the Qur'ānic verses), a practice which is common among the Shī'ah and, in particular, the Ismā'īlīs. The Sufis, equally with the Ismā'īlīs, stress the *bāṭin* (the esoteric aspect) of things. This shows that there had been some interaction between the Sufi and the Shī'ī movements.

The early ascetics of Islam had followed the path of self-renunciation. The Sufis went to the extreme of self-annihilation (*fanā*), a doctrine which smacks of Buddhist *nirvāna*. However, the Sufis claim that it is not total self-annihilation to which they aspire,

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but the annihilation of the lower self which is followed by the emergence of the higher self.

The main characteristic of Sufism, however, is its ideal of knowledge, the *ma'rifah* or gnosis. It is not the intellectual knowledge of God, however, to which the Sufi aspires but mystical union with Him through spiritual ecstasy. In fact, Sufism is opposed to all intellectual modes of knowing and disparages them. In this sense it is anti-rational. For example, the author of *Kashf-al-Maḥjūb* says :

> You must know that there is a great difference of opinion touching the gnosis and right cognition of God. The M'utazilites assert that gnosis is intellectual and that a rational person (*'āqil*) has the possibility of possessing it. This doctrine is disproved by the fact that mad men within Islam, are deemed to have gnosis, and that children, who are not rational, are deemed to have faith. If the criterion of gnosis was an intellectual one, such persons must be without gnosis, while unbelievers could not be charged with infidelity, provided only that they were reasonable beings. In reality, Man's only guide and enlightener is God. Reason and the proofs adduced by reason are unable to direct any one into the right way. Ordinary objects of search are found by means of demonstration, but knowledge of God is extraordinary. Therefore, knowledge of Him is attained only by unceasing bewilderment of the reason, and His favour is not procured by any act of human acquisition, but is miraculously revealed to men's hearts.[12]

In spite of their disparagement of reason, the Sufis had to justify their moral and metaphysical attitudes by means of rational thought. For this purpose, they developed the doctrine of metaphysical monism, called *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of existence), which had very grave ethical consequences, since it entailed the denial of the existence of evil and resulted in a full-fledged determinism that could admit of no free-will. From all these standpoints, i.e. its monistic world-view which abolished the distinction between God and man, its denial of the efficacy of the human will and its obliviousness to the presence of evil, Sufi standpoint was very different from that of early Islam, and because the moral attitudes engendered by Sufism permeated the masses of the Muslim Community, Iqbal rightly thought that it must

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share with other contributory factors the responsibility for the decline which set in among Muslims after the classical period of Islam.

SUFI METAPHYSICS AND ETHICS

The greatest exponent of Sufi monism was Ibn al-'Arabī. According to him, God is pure existence which at its transcendental level has no essence and no name, and is, therefore, to be described negatively. At the second level, God contemplates and knows Himself. This self-knowledge generates the attributes of Life, Knowledge, Will, etc., which also form the content of His knowledge. Ibn al-'Arabī regards this realm of the content of the Divine knowledge as an entity in itself. This is the world of essences which constitutes the realm of Divine consciousness. This world is co-eternal with God and does not exist externally (for what exists so far externally is the transcendent Reality) but only in the mind of God. Ibn al-'Arabī, who has a great deal to say about this world, calls it the "inner" of God and God the "exterior" of it. The essences have not "tasted concrete existence." God gives them existence by reflecting them in the mirror of His own existence which is the only external concrete existence that there is. When the essences are thus reflected, they come into existence and become the world. This is, in the words of Professor Fazlur Rahman, "the existential pantheism of Ibn al-'Arabī. Nothing has really changed, there has been no becoming of any kind: the world simply existentially reproduces God's interior exactly."[13]

Ibn al-'Arabī abrogated the whole idea of contingency for, according to him, the world is as necessary as God. Things, in Ibn al-'Arabī's view, are either necessary or impossible. On the other hand, Ibn Sīnā regards the world as the realm of contingent beings. The existence of the contingent, in Ibn Sīnā's philosophy, is not given in its essence but is bestowed by God. How could the contingent, then, ever hope to shed its limitations so completely as to become identical with God—even in mystic experience? "It is for this reason that Ibn Sīnā regards with genuine horror the suggestion that God conceived as soul, exists in everything according to its measure."[14] But this is actually the central idea in Ibn al-'Arabī's metaphysics which teaches us that the world is but the other side of God. Indeed Ibn al-'Arabī calls the Perfect Man the God-Creature and identifies the Essence of Essences with the Sufi

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essence of Muḥammad.

The metaphysical monism is carried by Ibn al-'Arabī unrelentingly into the denial of ethical dualism. "For time, *the world taken in its entirety*, is the revelation of God, and the conflict of likes and dislikes constitutes the rhythm of God Himself at this level."[15]

Another important Sufi thinker, who contributed to the monistic system of Sufi beliefs was Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī who was born about the middle of the 12th century. He is known as the *Shaykh 'l-Ishrāq* (the propounder of the philosophy of illumination). Like Ibn al-'Arabī, he denied the distinction between the necessary being and the contingent being. "Necessary being, he says, is that pure being which is the most perfect, whereas my being is imperfect: it is related to God as the ray of light is related to the sun. When the difference in perfection and imperfection (as between me and God) does exist, no other differentia is needed. The contingency of my being consists precisely in its imperfection (and nothing else) and the necessity of His being means His perfect existence. If it is objected that in a self-subsisting entity (like being) there is no more or less (or perfect and imperfect), I shall say this is pure dogmatism."[16]

Thus, according to al-Suhrawardī, Man is only a lesser god as God is just a greater Man. The scale of the continuum of Reality is differentiated only by points of varying degrees and these points represent the eternal realm of Platonic Ideas which he reaffirms in *Ḥikmat 'l-Ishrāq*. But the realm of Ideas is not the heterogeneous mass of peripatetic essences, but a homogeneous substance—Light in which the Ideas appear as so many glittering centres of radiation.

Self-awareness is regarded by al-Suhrawardī as the constitutive element of being. The Self is nothing but self-manifestation and self-luminosity. Al-Suhrawardī claims that only by taking Light to be the real nature of being and not merely immateriality—as the philosophers had done—can one establish a spiritually self-conscious ego. Al-Suhrawardī, thus, erects a pantheism of self-luminous, self-reflecting, self-present existences varying in degrees of intensity. "The whole of God is existence and the whole of existence is God."[17]

We see how this Sufi monism overlooks the differences, the conflicts and the moral tensions that exist in the world, and which can be ignored only at great peril to the social integrity of the

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Muslim Community. It is a deterministic structure of the universe into which the Sufi theosophs want us to fit ourselves. Doubtless the Sufi thought produced a certain catholicity of outlook, but it also created indifference to social conditions and to the preservation of the socio-political integrity of Islam, for the Sufi was exclusively preoccupied with the spiritual progress of the individual and had no thought to spare for the moral and material progress of the society in which he lived, as if the individual could escape and flout his social destiny.

REACTION

The reaction against Sufism was led, in the first instance, by Ibn Taymīyah. In a small treatise entitled *Ahl al-Ṣuffah*,[18] Ibn Taymīyah undertakes a refutation of the Sufi thesis that the Companions of the Prophet who lived in *Ṣuffah* (adjacent to the Prophet's Mosque at Medina) had anything in common with the Sufis of the later times. He says that when the Prophet migrated to Medina, only a few migrants from Mecca joined him but later on there was constant addition to this small group of emigrants, so that the Helpers could not provide accommodation to the large stream of emigrants. Therefore, the Prophet ordered them to use the *Ṣuffah* of the Mosque at Medina for residential purposes. But it is historically wrong to claim that the "people of *Ṣuffah*" were a permanent body of residents. On the other hand, there was a constant influx and efflux going on. New emigrants came in to reside at *Ṣuffah*, while those who already lived there left the *Ṣuffah*, if they could find accommodation for themselves and their families. Again, the Companions of the Prophet who lived at *Ṣuffah* made their own living, if they could. Only those who could make no living were helped by the Prophet. Therefore, there was no person among the *Ahl al-Ṣuffah* who had taken to voluntary poverty. If some of them did not make any living, it was not by choice that they did so but by the compulsion of circumstances. Ibn Taymīyah further refutes the theory that the *Ahl al-Ṣuffah* abstained from warfare. He says that most of them joined the campaigns undertaken by the Prophet and none of them fought against the Muslims on the side of the disbelievers. He also repudiates the view expressed by the Sufis that the *Ahl al-Ṣuffah* were in any way considered superior in rank to other Companions of the Prophet. He says that the ten Com-

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panions of the Prophet who were promised rewards in the Hereafter, as expressly stated in the Qur'ān, were definitely more exalted in rank. Similarly, the verse of the Holy Qur'ān, "Restrain thyself along with those who cry unto their Lord at morn and evening, seeking His countenance ; and let not thine eyes overlook them, desiring the pomp of the life of the world" (XVIII : 29) is of general application and does not apply, Ibn Taymīyah forcefully asserts, specifically to the people living at *Ṣuffah*.

Ibn Taymīyah's criticism of Sufi metaphysics is directed against the doctrines of Union (*Ittiḥād*) and Incarnation (*Ḥulūl*). He says that the doctrine of Incarnation is associated with many Sufis of later times and that is the reason why some of the leaders of Sufism repudiated it. For example, Junayd said : *Tawḥīd* consists in making a distinction between the eternal and the originated. But Ibn al-'Arabī rejected this stand and said that Junayd and his associates died without knowing the real nature of *Tawḥīd* for, according to Ibn al-'Arabī, *Tawḥīd* consists in not making a distinction between God and His creatures. He further maintained that no one can establish a distinction between the eternal and the originated unless he himself belonged to neither category.[19]

Commenting on the theory put forward by Ibn al-'Arabī, Ibn Taymīyah says that his theory is based on two presuppositions. Firstly, that the non-existent is an entity. This doctrine was held by many of the Mu'tazilah and the extremists among the Shī'ah. Secondly, that the existence of the originated and created things is identical with the existence of the Creator. This doctrine is shared by Ibn al-'Arabī with other *Ittiḥādīyah* (those who believe in Union), but Ibn al-'Arabī is in nearer to Islam by comparison with them, because he makes a distinction between *ẓāhir*, i.e. that which manifests itself (God) and the *maẓāhir* (phenomena).[20]

However, in spite of this, the theory of Ibn al-'Arabī is unacceptable, because, says Ibn Taymīyah, according to Ibn al-'Arabī the subsisting essences (*al-A'yān 'l-thābitah*) exist in their own right prior to their actual existence as phenomena. Thus, they do not stand in need of God. Rather, God stands in need of them in order to confer existence on them. Now, according to the Qur'ān, God is independent of the world. He stands in need of nothing, but everything else stands in need of Him. Therefore, Ibn al-'Arabī's metaphysical theory conflicts with the fundamentals

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of religion.[21]

Ibn Taymīyah further criticises Ibn al-'Arabī for making God's knowledge of His creatures dependent on His knowledge of the subsisting essences (in their state of non-existence). God in Himself knows nothing about His creatures, on Ibn al-'Arabī's theory. All such knowledge is derived from His knowledge of the essences. Again, His knowledge of the subsisting essences (in the state of non-existence) prevents Him from doing anything contrary to His knowledge. This leads to a rigorous determinism and destroys God's freedom of will, because everything is already given in the essences. God has only to make them manifest by conferring existence on them. Things cannot be different from what is already contained in their essences.[22] Ibn Taymīyah further quotes Ibn al-'Arabī's dictum that God rarefied Himself and called Himself *Ḥaqq* (God) in this state. He, then, condensed Himself and called Himself creation (in this state). But this is untenable, "because if that which is rarefied is identical with that which has been condensed, then God is the world and there has been neither rarefaction nor condensation, but if that which is rarefied is different from that which has been condensed, then the identity of God and His creation cannot be affirmed and this is the real truth."[23]

Similarly, Ibn Taymīyah criticises Ibn al-'Arabī for his dictum that the exterior of God is His creation, while the interior of God is He Himself. But this presupposes that there are two entities, one of which is His exterior and the other His interior, which is not true, because, says Ibn-Taymīyah, the distinction between existence and essence is totally unreal.[24]

But Ibn Taymīyah's most trenchant criticism against the Sufis is directed against their determinism and denial of free-will in man. He says that the Sufis waver between free-will and determinism opting neither for the one nor for the other. "As some of the *'lUamā'* have remarked, you are a believer in free-will in matters of obedience (that is, when you carry out the divine commands), but when you commit a sin you turn into a determinist."[25] If determinism were true, says Ibn Taymīyah (as the Sufis maintain) then the determinist should not seek the help of the law in case he is wronged. If the wrongdoer destroys his property or inflicts physical injuries on him or brings him to dishonour, the determinist should do nothing against the wrongdoer and let him live in

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peace. But, adds Ibn Taymīyah, this is impossible as it runs counter to human nature.[26]

A far deeper criticism of Sufi metaphysics came from Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī. Ibn al-'Arabī held that the multiplicity of the attributes, which constitute the divine mind, was the furniture of the universe. The world, in fact, was nothing but the divine attributes reflected in the only external existent. These divine attributes Ibn al-'Arabī calls the essences of the contingents. But Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī claims that when attributes come to exist in a multiple manner in the mind of God, they generate their own opposites. Thus, knowledge stands against an antithesis called ignorance, power is opposed by its contradictory, *viz.*, powerlessness, and so on. The sum-total of these attributes and their specific antitheses constitute both the divine consciousness and the material of the universe. The essences of the contingents are really the opposites of the divine attributes, or non-being. But in these opposites or antitheses the positive attributes cast their reflections. The essences of the contingents are thus these non-beings plus the reflections that come to inhere in them of the positive attributes.

Now, since one of the perfections of God is external existence, the contingents by receiving an effluence of this perfection cease to be mere essences in the Divine Mind and come to exist externally. This is creation. When Ibn al-'Arabī talks of reflection, he makes the world only an attenuated carbon copy of God. But, according to Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī, "the world *exists externally not only to God's mind but also to His Being.* It is an imperfect Being with only a derivative existence, but it is on its own, with its own constitution, its own capacities and destiny."[27]

The chief concern of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī is to bring into focus the moral dualism between God and the World and metaphysics is used as means to this end. The essence of the world is non-being and evil : it cannot be predicated of God. But the world as it actually exists, is not pure evil because the reflections of the Divine are also its constitutive elements. These reflections, however, are reflections of God and cannot, as such, be predicated of God. The error of Ibn al-'Arabī and of the majority of the Sufis who followed him consists in (*a*) not recognizing the fundamental evil in the world and (*b*) calling it a reflection of God but identifying the reflection with the original. A reflection

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of a shadow can only metaphysically be said to be that of which it is a reflection or a shadow. "A literal identification is nothing but an intellectual confusion and a religious disaster."[28]

SUFISM AND THE MODERN WORLD

We have discussed the speculative philosophy developed by the Sufis and also noted the reaction it produced among the Muslim thinkers like Ibn Taymīyah and Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī. It is evident that Sufi speculative thought did not appeal to those minds which were interested in the task of reconstructing Muslim society along the lines envisaged by the Qur'ān and the Prophet of Islam. Indeed, it is one of the basic deficiencies of Sufism that it takes society for granted as it finds it and then attempts to reform the individuals within the existing framework of society. That the task of the individual's reformation and self-improvement is necessary, we admit, for we cannot attempt to reconstruct society on *Islamic lines* without individuals who are not only Muslims but good Muslims, too. But the difficulty is that the Sufi conception of a good Muslim differs in many respects from the Qur'ānic concept of a good Muslim and the techniques adopted by Sufism are not conducive to the shaping of individual lives in a manner that could be of any help in the reconstruction of Muslim society. The Qur'ānic concept of a good Muslim is not merely that of an individual who possesses religious piety in the generally accepted sense of the word but of one who is *actively* virtuous, one who is ready to sacrifice his wealth and, if need be, his life in the cause of faith. This means that he should be actively interested not merely in his own self-improvement but also in the destiny of Islam as a movement and in the welfare, moral and material, of those who form part of the movement. This is a much broader concept of goodness than that posited by Sufism which seeks to produce good men but not good citizens. It is true that you cannot be a good citizen without being a good man, but the reverse is also equally true. A type of personality which is mainly preoccupied with its own spiritual progress and regards all material possessions as superfluous, if not wholly evil, which is indifferent to political and economic trends and which does not prepare itself for participation in the task of social reconstruction, is hardly the type of personality that can be of much value in the critical times through which we are passing.

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It may be objected to this that today we are not threatened by too much self-renunciation or too much other-worldliness. On the contrary, the threat to our social and spiritual integrity comes from a total lack of self-renunciation and from too much worldliness. Grosser forms of materialism have invaded us. The indifference to our social and spiritual well-being comes not from Sufism or any form of perverted religion but from the hedonism inherent in industrial culture which regards material possessions and sensuous pleasures as the end of life. This is all very true. But one excess cannot be corrected by another. Certainly we need today a greater devotion to the things of the spirit or higher values, nor is there any doubt that without a certain degree of self-renunciation nothing high can be achieved in the realm of intellect or in the field of politics. It is in this sense that self-imposed poverty becomes necessary, namely, the *faqr* required by the Sufis. It is also true that in a world in which the race for material prosperity and social prestige has become the all-absorbing concern of life, there is need for a certain amount of retirement and devotional exercises, so as to produce a greater degree of God-Consciousness. Similarly, in a society where material progress is the only yardstick for the measurement of social worth, there is a greater need of individual effort being directed towards moral self-improvement. This much of Sufism we do require, if it can be so called. But what we do not require today is the spirit of total withdrawal from the affairs of the world and a purely individual morality or absolute unconcern with matters which vitally affect our destiny as a distinct political society. The Prophet of Islam withdrew himself to the cave of Ḥirā' only to return with redoubled energy and change the society and the world around him. He never went back to the cave afterwards. The society and the world of today require no less radical changes. For this purpose we need individuals who can combine their own moral self-improvement with the enthusiasm and energy that should characterize those who attempt a radical social reconstruction. All retirement, all devotional exercises, all self-renunciation and all attempts to forego worldly possessions should be directed to this supreme task. If not, they will achieve nothing. Sufism in the sense of individual efforts to reform and improve oneself morally and spiritually is still relevant to the times in which we live. But as an organised and formal affair with its special

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techniques, it is a spent force that will never come into its own again.

In one of his lectures Iqbal has stressed the dangers of over-organization and expressed himself in favour of rearing self-concentrated individuals. "In an over-organised society," he writes, "the individual is altogether crushed out of existence. He gains the whole world of social thought around him but loses his own soul. The only effective power, therefore, that counteracts the forces of decay in a people is the rearing of self-concentrated individuals. Such individuals alone reveal the depth of life. They disclose new standards in the light of which we begin to see that our environment is not wholly inviolable and requires revision. The tendency to over-organization by a false reverence of the past as manifested in the legists of Islam in the thirteenth century and, later, was contrary to the inner impulse of Islam and consequently invoked the powerful reaction of Ibn Taimīyah."[29]

If we wish to understand what Iqbal means by self-concentrated individuals, we shall have to study his poetry where he often speaks of *mard-i-qalandar*, *mard-i-mu'min* and *mard-i-ḥurr* and builds up the image of a personality that resembles the Sufis in some respects but differs from them in other respects. He is not in favour of formal and traditional Sufism, because he thinks that the spark of life has gone out of it :

اب حجرۂ صوفی میں وہ فقر نہیں باقی خون دل شیراں ہو جس فقر کی دستاویز

"Nothing of *faqr* (voluntary poverty) remains in the secluded room of the Sufi whose documentary evidence is the blood that courses in the hearts of lion-hearted people."[30]

اٹھا میں مدرسہ و خانقاہ سے غمناک نہ زندگی نہ محبت نہ معرفت نہ نگاہ

"I rose from the *madrasah* (of the *'Ulamā'*) and the monastery (of the Sufis) saddened by the experience that there is neither life, nor love, nor gnosis, nor vision in these places."[31]

رہا نہ حلقۂ صوفی میں سوز مشتاقی فسانہ ہائے کرامات رہ گئے باقی

"Nothing of the fire of curiosity and desire remains in the circle of the Sufis. Only stories of their miracles have survived."[32]

Nevertheless, some of the qualities which characterized Sufis form the ingredients of a character which Iqbal holds up as a model. For example, he says :

علاج آتش رومی کے سوز میں ہے تیرا تری خرد پہ ہے غالب فرنگیوں کا فسوں

"The warmth of Rūmī's fire constitutes thy remedy. Thy reason has been waylaid by the magic of Westerners."[33]

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Like the Sufis, Iqbal stresses the fact that formal teaching is as nothing compared to the living contact of a dynamic personality, which has a transforming effect on character:

صحبت از علم کتابی خوش تر است صحبت مردان حُر آدم گر ست

"Company (of living personalities) is better than the knowledge obtained from books. The company of free men is creative of fresh personalities."[34]

Like the Sufis, again, Iqbal holds up the ideal of voluntary poverty and disparages academic learning by comparison with the vision imparted to the disciples by a spiritual teacher:

علم کا مقصود ہے پاکیٔ عقل و خرد فقر کا مقصود ہے عفّت قلب و نگاہ

"Knowledge aims at the purification of reason and intellect, but *faqr* (voluntary poverty) aims at the purification of the heart and the sight."[35]

But to these qualities of character which are shared by the Sufis, are superadded higher qualities which were exemplified by the Prophet and his Companions, who differed in some fundamental respects from the Sufis. For example, Iqbal often refers to the revolutionary character of their personality, in the political as well as the social sense of the word:

نہ ایران میں رہے باقی نہ توران میں رہے باقی
وہ بندے فقر تھا جن کا ہلاک قیصر و کسریٰ

"Neither in Irān nor in Tūrān, survive those creatures of God whose *faqr* was destructive of the empires of Caesar and Chosroes."[36]

The reference clearly is to the early Companions of the Prophet, who destroyed the Byzantine and the Sāsānian empires, despite their poor living conditions.

Similarly, Iqbal says:

مہر و مہ و انجم کا محاسب ہے قلندر ایّام کا مرکب نہیں راکب ہے قلندر

"The *qalandar* calls to account the moon and the stars. He is not ridden by the Time, rather he rides over the Time."[37] This plainly means that Iqbal wants a character-pattern which instead of adjusting itself to the exigencies of the times, changes the direction of history and overcomes it by the sheer force of will and insight.

Iqbal likewise speaks of the lofty aims which mark out a dynamic personality from men of lesser stature:

خاکی و نوری نہاد بندۂ مولا صفات ہر دو جہاں سے غنی اس کا دل بے نیاز
اس کی امیدیں قلیل اس کے مقاصد جلیل اس کی ادا دلفریب اس کی نگہ دلنواز

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"Created of dust, but having the effulgence of light, this creature who resembles the Creator in his qualities is uninterested in (the possessions of) either world. His (worldly) expectations are few, but his aims are lofty, his manners attractive and his eyes charming."[38]

This is the kind of self-concentrated individual on whom Iqbal pins his hopes. It is clear that he is not anxious to revive Sufism, though he would like to preserve some of the character traits produced by the Sufi movement. But unless other qualities are added to these character traits, qualities of a more virile, active and dynamic nature, the traditional Sufi character-pattern is no answer to the challenge of modernism.

NOTES

1. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Lahore, 1962, 150.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, 150 and 151.
4. Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, Lahore, n.d. 176.
5. Fazlur Rahman, *Islamic Methodology in History*, Lahore, 1964, 107.
6. For a detailed discussion of the subject, *ibid.*, 57.
7. Khalīl al-Jārr and Ḥannā al-Fākhūrī, *Ta'rikh-al-Falsafat al-'Arabiyah*, Beirut, n.d., I : 293.
8. Iqbal, *Metaphysics in Persia*, *op. cit.*, 79.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, 80.
11. Fazlur Rahman, *op. cit.*, 110.
12. Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, English translation by R. A. Nicholson, London, 1922, 268.
13. Fazlur Rahman, *Introduction to Sirhindi's Letters* (*Maktūbāt*), Chapter I (unpublished).
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. Ibn Taymīyah, *Rasā'il wa Fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām*, Cairo, 1341 A.H., I : 25-60.
19. *Ibid.*, 71.
20. *Ibid.*, 175.
21. *Ibid.*, 67.
22. *Ibid.*, 50.
23. *Ibid.*, 67.
24. *Ibid.*, 77.
25. *Ibid.*, 72-73.
26. *Ibid.*, 89-90.

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27. Fazlur Rahman, *Introduction to Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī's Letters*, *op. cit.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. Iqbal, *Reconstruction.*, *op. cit.*, 151.
30. Iqbal, *Bāl-i-Jibrīl*, Lahore, 1959, 42.
31. *Ibid.*, 70.
32. *Ibid.*, 95.
33. *Ibid.*, 44.
34. Iqbal, *Mathnawī Pas chi Bāyad Kard*, Lahore, n.d., 34.
35. Iqbal, *Bāl-i-Jibrīl*, *op. cit.*, 110.
36. *Ibid.*, 38.
37. Iqbal, *Ḍarb-i-Kalīm*, Lahore, 1959, 36.
38. Iqbal, *Bāl-i-Jibrīl*, *op. cit.*

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